ENGL 105 Script

[mountain wind noise] [birds chirping] [leaves rustling] - create ambiance of being on top of a mountain pass

[breathe in and out] In. Out. In. Out. The view before you and the hike behind you leave you breathless. The forest full of sharp branches and dim light has opened to reveal a magnificent expanse of blue sky. A lake below sparkles, reflecting the cloudless atmosphere and the bright sun above. Wildflowers cascade in sheets down the valley, blowing softly in the wind.

What [pause] a [pause] view. Like something from a childhood storybook. Only better because it’s real. It’s here. You can feel the dirt crunch [add sound] beneath your boots, keeping you grounded in this spectacular moment.

[end ambiance] [keep silence]

Keeping \*me\* grounded in all moments, in fact… for 4 weeks this last summer. They guided me along trails and across rough terrain. They were my truest companions on a wilderness adventure. And I have a feeling they will accompany me on future journeys as well.

[cue soft background music] [slow fade in]

When I first learned I was headed to the wilderness of Wyoming for 28 days and would be needing a sturdy pair of boots, I had no idea where to start… thankfully the experts at REI did.

After lots of deliberation (and much trying on), I wound up with a pair of smooth, brown leather Vasque’s. A pair of shoes that came to mean more to me than any others in my closet.

These boots taught me a life lesson about companionship.

[pause]

When buying my own boots, I learned that there are a variety of brands that all offer different hiking experiences: some are rigid, others are pliant-- you have to find the one that meets yours. Boots will never be one size fits all.

And True life companions are few and far between. You don’t typically run across one every day, you often have to seek them out. And there is a certain balance required to develop the friendship. You have to fit each other.

Though there may be an intrinsic sense of comfort, the fit takes time to secure. Anyone whose worn hiking boots before will tell you they take time to break in. Time, repetition, and a whole lot of blisters.

When you’re getting used to being with someone for extended periods of time, friction occurs… it’s a natural result of increased contact. Blisters form. Feelings hurt. But they also heal. Once again, it takes time.

In the breaking-in process, experts will advise you to wear layers of socks as extra protection against the heavy boots. It is only after you’re used to the weight around your ankle that you can peel away a layer.

It’s often only after you experience something heavy together that you can be vulnerable with someone. Allowing another to see beneath the walls you build up takes trust and practice.

But you’ll come to discover that if you put in the effort, the protection and support from your boots will last a lifetime, far longer than any pair of socks ever could.

But be reminded, this effort requires sacrifice. You have to spend time hiking in the rigid structure to allow the boots the flexibility to mold around your foot. Development only comes from time together.

No matter how clunky, obnoxious, and tedious they felt some days, the trip required heavy-duty boots for a reason. Mountains weren’t made to be walked alone or in poor company.

[insert hiking track over music] [or instead of music… play around]

And In all honesty, these boots saved my life quite a few times. They provided a grip on slippery boulders. They rooted my ankles when a fallen branch could’ve broken them. They kept me warm through frigid river crossings. They offered comfort to my aching feet on 11-mile days. My boots aided not only in my survival, but in the joy of my journey.

[add music back in or cut out hiking sound]

These boots have been with me through their fare share of mud and grime, but each layer of dirt only adds to the strength of their character. Life, like any good wilderness adventure, is messy.

And the truth of the matter is: life companions don’t make life any cleaner. Rather, they’re the ones willing to get down in the mud with you, to support you through the storm, and to help you up the mountain when you’re grip is slipping. To ground you through the ups and downs, and walk through this adventure we call life.

Here's to the next step, and the ones walking beside you.

[fade out with music]